REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to thank Examiner Labaze for granting an interview and for his time spent in the interview. In addition, Applicants would also like to thank Primary Examiner Thien Le for participating in the interview and for his input during the interview.

Claims 28-46, 48 and 51-53 are pending in the application.

Claims 28-46 and 51-53 are rejected as anticipated by WINDEL et al. (US 5,953,426). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As set forth at the interview, WINDEL et al. disclose a method for checking a security imprint in a postage meter machine (a terminal), not a method for producing a franking mark on a postal document, that includes the step of generating and storing a set of unique bit strings in a first memory of a central office as recited in claim 28 of the present application.

As pointed out at the interview, the method of WINDEL et al. is arranged to detect manipulations with postage meter machines. The check is performed by acquiring and evaluating statistical data obtained on franking marks that are issued by a terminal, i.e., a certain postage meter. When there are inconsistencies, the postage meter is marked as being suspicious,

and the postal authorities may be warned (see, e.g., col. 21, lines 55-58).

The position set forth in the Official Action is that WINDEL et al. disclose a method and arrangement for generating and checking a security imprint, which includes generating and storing a set of unique bit strings in a first memory 5 in a central office connected to a plurality of terminals. As pointed out at the interview, this position is untenable for at least the following reasons.

WINDEL et al. do not disclose the central generation of unique bit strings. The string in column 13, line 1 is not defined as a unique bit string, but as a number chain, which may be entered with a keyboard (col. 13, lines 1-5).

Moreover, the central data station does not comprise first memory 5. First memory area 5 is located in the terminal, as is described with respect to Fig. 1, showing a circuit diagram of a first version of the postage meter machine (col. 10, lines 11-12), not a first memory in a central office as recited.

The position set forth in the Official Action is that WINDEL et al. disclose "making available one or more of the unique bit strings of the terminals" wherein the unique bit strings are defined in Fig. 2 as a franking mark FM sub I to M and the terminals are defined as a post office. "FM" in WINDEL et al. does not stand for franking mark, but stands for

Frankiermaschiene, which is German for "postage meter machine" (e.g., col. 18, lines 6-7). Furthermore, the terminals are not defined as a post office. Instead, WINDEL et al. define the terminals as postage meter machines.

An additional position set forth in the Official Action is that WINDEL et al. disclose the storage of the combination of a copy of the unique bit string in combination with the identification code in a second memory area II. However, as pointed out at the interview, the second memory area II of WINDEL et al. is not located in the central office, as recited in the present invention, but is in the terminal, as is shown in Fig. 1.

Further, column 15, lines 1-25 of WINDEL et al. (noted in the Official Action) does not disclose the reception of a unique bit string by a terminal that was sent by the central office, and transmitting said unique bit string back from the terminal towards the central office for storage in a (second) memory, as is claimed in claims 28 and 37 of the present application.

For at least the reasons set forth above, claims 28 and 37 and the claims that depend therefrom are believed patentable over WINDEL et al.

By way of further explanation, claims 28 and 37 of the present application provide a central office that generates a set of unique bit strings and stores the set in a first memory and in

combination with an identification code of a terminal in a second memory. WINDEL et al. disclose a number of memories including first till fifth memory areas in the terminal, and not in the central data station (see col. 11, line 22 - col. 14, line 16). The memories of WINDEL et al. are arranged to store relevant information regarding the terminal and the franking mark, thus leading away from a central storage of information as required by the present invention.

In addition as disclosed and recited in the present invention, the central office issues a set of unique bit strings to a terminal, and stores the issued unique bit strings in combination with the identification number of the terminal.

As noted at the interview, in WINDEL et al., the central data station and the terminal also communicate regularly; however, such communication is regarding the credit that is issued to a particular terminal. The central data station may store data (e.g., col. 7, lines 27-29) related to the date of the last communication, the credit data loaded at the date of the last communication and a specific quantity that was measured at the date of the last communication, known to both the terminal and the central data station (col. 7, lines 6-13).

In addition, the terminal of WINDEL et al. communicates the credit data stored in its memories to the central data station for the purpose of checking such credit data (col. 7,

lines 50-52). The average inflow of credit is compared to the outflow of credit and a calculation is performed to analyze the previous use of the terminal and to predict its future user behavior (col. 5, lines 55-59).

As pointed out at the interview, the central data station in WINDEL et al. thus analyzes the performance of a terminal, based on a comparison between centrally stored data and data stored in the terminal, thereby examining the average performance, thus leading away from the concept of individually assigning unique bit strings to an individual franking mark as claimed in claims 28 and 37.

As further noted, the present invention thereby provides a control mechanism for an individual franking mark, printed on an individual postal article, instead of a control mechanism to check the average performance of an individual terminal as taught by WINDEL et al.

Claim 48 is rejected as unpatentable over WINDEL et al. in view of GELFER et al. (US 6,587,843). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

GELFER et al. disclose a method for improving the security of postage meter machines in credit transfers. The method of GELFER et al. discloses the setting and erasing of a security flag under pre-defined circumstances.

The Official Action refers to claim 6 of GELFER et al. In claim 6, the method discloses the use of a chip card in connection with a postage meter machine. However, the card is only used as a security measure in the sense that it provides an adequate identification of the user. The method does not include the adjustment of data, which is stored on the card, as is claimed in claim 48 of the present application.

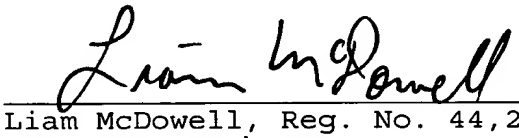
Combining GELFER et al. with the teachings of WINDEL et al. would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to understand that it may be possible to build in an extra security check by using a chip card. This combination does not suggest to check whether the value of a counter, which is provided on the chip card, lies within predefined limits, and if this is the case to instruct the chip card to adjust the value of the counter, and if it is not the case to block the printing of the franking mark such that the data is compiled by the printing device and made available for the franking mark for the postal article as recited in claim 48 of the present application. Therefore, claim 48 is believed patentable over WINDEL et al. in view of GELFER et al.

In view of the foregoing remarks and based upon the remarks in the Interview Summary from the interview of July 20, 2004, the present application is believed to define over the prior art and is believed in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.16 or under 37 C.F.R.§1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG & THOMPSON



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